

VZCZCXRO9614

PP RUEHAO RUEHCD RUEHGA RUEHGD RUEHHA RUEHHO RUEHMC RUEHNG RUEHNL
RUEHQU RUEHRD RUEHRG RUEHRS RUEHTM RUEHVC
DE RUEHCV #2077 2982107
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 252107Z OCT 07
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9976
INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 002077

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

HQSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
DEPT PASS TO AID/OTI RPORTER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/25/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: UNIVERSITY STUDENTS PROTEST CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

Classified By: ACTING DCM ROBERT DOWNES, REASON 1.4(D)

11. (U) In spite of a steady rain, violent pro-Chavez counter-protesters, delayed permits, and National Guard roadblocks preventing additional student protesters from entering Caracas, some 20,000 students marched through downtown Caracas October 23 protesting Chavez' proposed constitutional reforms and calling for the referendum to be postponed until February 3, 2008 so that voters better understand the reforms.

12. (U) Many of the marchers carried signs and chanted anti-Chavez slogans. Although the National Guard blocked the marchers from reaching the National Assembly building, four student leaders were permitted to meet with 25 members of the National Assembly. The National Guard was far from neutral, as it failed to adequately control pro-Chavez counter-protesters who threw glass, fireworks and stones. There were also reports of roaming motorcades, adorned in red (the color of pro-Chavez organizations), attempting to intimidate protesters. A smaller student protest was held in Lara state.

13. (C) Comment. Contrary to its initial, more heavy-handed suppression of student demonstrations in June, the Chavez government handled these protests more astutely as there were only a few minor injuries. Given government obstacles and inclement weather, the student protest, the largest since the June demonstrations to protest the closing of RCTV, was relatively successful. The students plan a follow-up march to the National Electoral Commission (CNE) on November 2 and remain an important factor in the anti-Chavez movement. End Comment.

FRENCH